

Senate Bill 270

By: Senators Hamrick of the 30th and Unterman of the 45th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

To amend Title 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to social services, so as to provide for the Office of Runaway Children Assistance within the Department of Juvenile Justice; to provide for certain duties and structure; to provide for an alert system for runaway children; to provide for a procedure of sharing material information regarding runaway children; to provide for a process to maintain certain records; to provide for the procedure for the taking and releasing of custody of runaway children; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Title 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to social services, is amended by designating the existing provisions of Chapter 4A, relating to the Department of Juvenile Justice, as Article 1 and adding a new Article 2 as follows:

"ARTICLE 2

49-4A-20.

As used in this article, the term:

(1) 'Runaway child' or 'runaway children' means a child or children under the age of 18 whose parents, legal guardian, or custodian has reported to a law enforcement agency that such person has reason to believe that the child or children have deserted without cause the child's or children's home or abode and are in imminent danger.

(2) 'Runaway child report' means a report prepared on a form designed by the department for the use by law enforcement agencies and private citizens to report information about runaway children to the Office of Runaway Children Assistance.

1 49-4A-21.

2 There is authorized within the department an Office of Runaway Children Assistance. The
3 office shall serve as a central repository of information regarding runaway children and
4 shall collect and disseminate such information as is necessary to assist in the location of
5 runaway children. The commissioner shall be responsible for the development, staffing,
6 and maintenance of the office.

7 49-4A-22.

8 (a) In establishing the duties and structure of the Office of Runaway Children Assistance
9 the department may:

10 (1) Establish a system of intrastate communication of information relating to runaway
11 children;

12 (2) Provide a centralized file for the exchange of information on runaway children within
13 the state;

14 (3) Interface and connect with the National Crime Information Center for the exchange
15 of information on runaway children;

16 (4) Collect, process, maintain, and disseminate information on runaway children and
17 unidentified bodies and strive to maintain or disseminate only accurate and complete
18 information;

19 (5) Cooperate with the State Board of Education in compiling lists of runaway children
20 in this state for distribution to local school districts;

21 (6) Compile annual statistics on the number of runaway children;

22 (7) Develop recommendations for better reporting and use of computer systems;

23 (8) Provide assistance to local law enforcement agencies providing fingerprint programs
24 for children;

25 (9) Circulate a monthly bulletin of runaway children to all law enforcement agencies in
26 the state;

27 (10) Assist local law enforcement agencies in establishing direct computer access to the
28 Office of Runaway Children Assistance;

29 (11) Act as a liaison between private citizens and law enforcement agencies regarding
30 appropriate procedures for handling and responding to runaway child reports; and

31 (12) Establish a toll-free telephone number to assist individuals and agencies in the
32 reporting of runaway children and information relative to runaway children.

33 (b) The department is authorized to join and participate in any network of state runaway
34 children centers or clearing-houses, specifically including but not limited to the National
35 Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

1 49-4A-23.

2 Upon the filing of a police report by the parent or guardian that a child has run away, the
3 local law enforcement agency receiving such report shall notify all of its on-duty law
4 enforcement officers of the existence of the runaway child report, communicate the report
5 to all other law enforcement agencies having jurisdiction in the county and all law
6 enforcement agencies of jurisdictions geographically adjoining that of the local law
7 enforcement agency, and transmit the report to the Office of Runaway Children Assistance.

8 49-4A-24.

9 Every law enforcement agency and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation shall transmit to
10 the Office of Runaway Children Assistance any information which is acquired or collected
11 pursuant to Code Section 35-1-8 or Code Section 35-3-4, which information would assist
12 in the location of any runaway child.

13 49-4A-25.

14 Any public or private organization which makes lists of or maintains records on runaway
15 children as a primary activity of that organization and which seeks to operate in the State
16 of Georgia shall register with the Office of Runaway Children Assistance.

17 49-4A-26.

18 Upon locating a runaway child, the department or other law enforcement agency shall
19 process the runaway child pursuant to the procedures set out in Part 5 of Article 1 of
20 Chapter 11 of Title 15."

21 **SECTION 2.**

22 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.